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INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL



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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 246

LIMDIS

REF: STATE 218793

1. WE BELIEVE THAT THONG WILL REDUCE HIS CHANCE OF BEING ELECTED IF HE STAYS IN VUNG TAU THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN, BUT PERHAPS NOT BY ANY GREAT DEGREE. HE APPARENTLY HAS IN MIND TRYING TO PROJECT THE IMAGE OF AN ERADV STATESMAN OF GREAT INTEGRITY WHO WILL NOT RUN AFTER VOTES BUT WHO WILL SERVE THE PEOPLE IF CALLED BY THEM. A MCKINLEY TYPE "FRONT PORCH CAMPAIGN" FROM VUNG TAU WOULD FIT THIS IMAGE BETTER THAN ACTIVE STUMPING. SUCH A TACTIC WOULD ALSO MAKE A VIRTUE OF WHAT HUONG PROBABLY REGARDS AS A NECESSITY - I.E., RECOGNIZING

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THAT BETTER TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION FACILITIES WILL LIKELY BE AVAILABLE TO THIEU AND KY AND ENTOURAGE. AT THE SAME TIME HUONG'S YOUNG SUPPORTERS SUCH AS THE MOVEMENT FOR THE RENAISSANCE OF THE SOUTH AND VO LONG TRIEU COULD STILL MOVE ABOUT THE COUNTRY ACTIVELY ORGANIZING AND GETTING OUT THE VOTE FOR HUONG. IF THIS IS INDEED HUONG'S STRATEGY, IT IS PERHAPS NOT TOO BADLY ADAPTED TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND TO VIETNAMESE PSYCHOLOGY. IT MAY ALSO BE WELL SUITED TO HUONG'S PHYSICAL CONDITION AND FINANCIAL MEANS, AND IT PROBABLY COINCIDED WITH HIS TENDENCY TO SIT IN VUNG TAU AND WAIT LIKE DE GAULLE FOR HISTORY TO SWING AROUND AGAIN TO HIM.

2. IF ABOVE IS CORRECT ANALYSIS, WE DO NOT THINK HUONG'S STAYING IN VUNG TAU WOULD BE WIDELY CONSIDERED AS ABANDONMENT OF THE THE RACE TO THIEU AND KY. IT WOULD HOWEVER MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE LATTER TO SAY THAT THEY HAD TRIED TO PROVIDE EQUAL FACILITIES AND THAT HUONG HAD REFUSED THEM. OTHER CIVILIAN CANDIDATES ARE MORE LIKELY IN ANY CASE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FACILITIES OFFERED THEM.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY *John J. Givens* DATE 10/7/81

PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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3. WE DO NOT HAVE SOLID CORROBORATION OF THE ALLEGED RATHER SUBTLE POLICE HARASSMENT OF HUONG'S ORGANIZERS REPORTED REFTEL, BUT, WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF THIS HAD TAKEN PLACE IN SOME INSTANCES. OTHER YOUNG OPPOSING POLITICIANS SUCH AS LY QUY CHUNG AND NGUYEN VAN NGAI (SUPPORTING HA THUC KY) HAVE TOLD US SIMILAR STORIES. NGAI IN FACT CLAIMED HE HAD SEVEN SEPARATE VISITS BY GEN. LOAN, TRYING TO WHEELDE AND THEN INTIMIDATE HIM INTO SUPPORTING KY.] THEIR ACCOUNTS MAY WELL BE EXAGGERATED FOR EFFECT ON US, BUT WE HAVE HEARD ENOUGH TO ASSUME THERE IS SOME SUBSTANCE IN THEM. WE WILL CONTINUE TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THIS AND OTHER FORMS OF HARASSMENT.

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4. ONE FORM OF OFFICIAL HARASSMENT REPORTED TO US HAS BEEN DELAY BY THE DEFENSE MINISTRY IN ISSUING MILITARY DRAFT STATUS CERTIFICATES.

AT OUR REQUEST GEN. WESTMORELAND MENTIONED THESE REPORTS TO GEN. CAO VAN VIEN. HIS REPLY WAS THAT IN ONLY ONE CASE, A DESERTER, WOULD THE CERTIFICATE BE WITHHELD. MOST OF THE PENDING CASES ARE UPPER HOUSE ASPIRANTS

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WHO MUST DOCUMENT THEIR FILINGS BEFORE JUNE 7, AND WE SHOULD SOON KNOW IF THE APPROACH TO VIEN HAS HAD THE DESIRED EFFECT OF BREAKING THEM LOOSE.

5. WE INTEND TO SEND AN EMBOFF TO VUNG TAI TO HEAR WHAT HUONG HAS TO SAY FOR HIMSELF AS SOON AS THIS CAN BE WORKED OUT (SAIGON 59). WE HAVE OFFERED TO FLY HUONG TO SAIGON FOR A LUNCHEON BY THE AMBASSADOR IN HONOR OF UNDER SECRETARY KATZENBACH NOW PLANNED FOR JULY 10 WHICH WILL INCLUDE ALL THE CIVILIAN PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE PRESIDENTIAL TEAMS. WE CONTINUE TO BE UNCERTAIN HOW FULLY SPEAKS FOR HUONG AND WE HOPE THESE NEXT DIRECT TALKS WITH HUONG MAY CLARIFY HIS OWN VIEWS.

BUNKER
BT *AS RECEIVED. WILL BE SERVICED UPON REQUEST.

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